



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

Press Statement

December 14, 2012

A Message Regarding the Tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School from Craig S. Stenning, State Mental Health Commissioner and Director of the RI Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals

All of us at the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals express our deepest sympathy to the families and friends of the victims of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown Connecticut.

Unimaginable tragedies, like the one that took place today, have a significant impact on everyone. It is normal to feel upset and anxious about your and your family's safety. Other responses, such as experiencing profound sadness, considerable grief or lack of sleep are also normal, expected reactions to an abnormal event. We encourage you to talk about your feelings and reactions with someone you trust. Acknowledging these emotions helps you come to terms with what has happened.

As this event continues to unfold, it is important for parents to convey to their children that they are safe. Control their exposure to the media, and watch them carefully. Some may have immediate reactions to the event, others may show worrisome behavior in a few days. Listening and talking to children about their concerns can reassure them.

If you are concerned about your child's reaction or you have trouble coping a new, free resource, the Disaster Distress Helpline, is available for immediate assistance or support. The Helpline is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Anyone seeking emotional help can call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746. The Helpline can also be accessed at <http://disasterdistress.samhsa.gov/>

###